

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of processing a call in a communications network; said method comprising:
receiving a call directed to one or more intended recipients;
determining whether group processing is required;
responsive to said determining, forwarding group related processing tasks to a group processor;
retrieving results of said group related processing tasks; and
initiating data communication in accordance with said retrieving.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said receiving includes employing a call processing engine to accept data packets having address information related to said one or more intended recipients.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein said determining includes examining address information associated with said one or more intended recipients to identify a group.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein said forwarding includes requesting said group processor to resolve a group request to a single target recipient selected from said one or more intended recipients.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein said forwarding includes requesting said group processor to manage more than one target recipient selected from said one or more intended recipients as a unit.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein said retrieving includes identifying ones of said one or more intended recipients as available targets.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein said identifying includes extracting data records related to recipient availability from a database.
8. The method of claim 6 wherein said initiating includes establishing data communication with one or more of said available targets.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein said call is transmitted in accordance with Session Initiation Protocol.
10. A call processing system comprising:
a call processing engine executing basic call processing tasks; and
a group processor executing group related processing tasks and returning results to said call processing engine.

11. The system of claim 10 wherein said group processor is responsive to requests from said call processing engine.
12. The system of claim 10 wherein said call processing engine is operative to receive data packets, to identify one or more intended recipients of said data packets, and to transmit identifying information associated with said one or more intended recipients to said group processor.
13. The system of claim 12 wherein said one or more intended recipients are identified according to header information parsed from said data packets.
14. The system of claim 12 wherein said group processor is operative to resolve a group request to one target selected from said one or more intended recipients.
15. The system of claim 14 wherein said call processing engine is operative to initiate a call involving said target.
16. The system of claim 12 wherein said group processor is further operative to determine the availability of said one or more intended recipients and to identify one or more available targets.
17. The system of claim 16 wherein said call processing engine is operative to initiate a call involving ones of said one or more available targets.
18. A server-based call processing system comprising:
- a call processing server, having data and a call processing engine residing thereon, identifying one or more intended recipients of a call and executing basic call processing tasks;
 - a grouping server receiving group related processing requests from said call processing engine; and
 - a contact server providing data associated with said one or more intended recipients to said grouping server.
19. The system of claim 18 further comprising a presence server maintaining data records related to the availability of said one or more intended recipients.
20. The system of claim 18 wherein said grouping server is operative to resolve a group request to a single target selected from said one or more intended recipients.
21. The system of claim 20 wherein said call processing engine initiates a call involving data communication to said target.

22. The system of claim 18 wherein said grouping server determines the availability of said one or more intended recipients to identify one or more available targets.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein said call processing engine initiates a call involving data communication to ones of said one or more available targets.

5 24. The system of claim 18 wherein said call is transmitted in accordance with Session Initiation Protocol.

25. A computer-readable medium encoded with data and computer executable instructions for processing a call; the data and instructions causing an apparatus executing the instructions to:

10 receive a call comprising a plurality of data packets directed to one or more intended recipients;

determine whether said call requires group processing;

forward group related processing tasks to a group processor providing group related processing results; and

15 initiate data communication in accordance with said group related processing results.

26. The computer-readable medium of claim 25 further encoded with data and instructions, further causing an apparatus to examine address information associated with said one or more intended recipients to identify a group.

20 27. The computer-readable medium of claim 25 further encoded with data and instructions, further causing an apparatus to resolve a group request to a single target recipient.

25 28. The computer-readable medium of claim 25 further encoded with data and instructions, further causing an apparatus to manage a plurality of said one or more intended recipients as a unit.

29. The computer-readable medium of claim 25 further encoded with data and instructions, further causing an apparatus to identify ones of said one or more intended recipients as available targets.

30 30. The computer-readable medium of claim 29 further encoded with data and instructions, further causing an apparatus to establish data communication with one or more of said available targets.

31. A system for processing a call in a communications network; said system comprising:
receiving means for receiving a call directed to one or more intended recipients;
determining means for determining whether group processing is required;
forwarding means for forwarding group related processing tasks to a group processor responsive to output from said determining means;
retrieving means for retrieving results of said group related processing tasks;
and
call initiation means for initiating data communication in accordance with said results.

32. The system of claim 31 wherein said receiving means includes a call processing engine operative to accept data packets having address information related to said one or more intended recipients.

33. The system of claim 31 wherein said determining means comprises means for examining address information associated with said one or more intended recipients to identify a group.

34. The system of claim 31 wherein said group processor comprises means for resolving a group request to a single target recipient selected from said one or more intended recipients.

35. The system of claim 31 wherein said group processor comprises means for managing more than one target recipient selected from said one or more intended recipients as a unit.

36. The system of claim 31 further comprising means for identifying ones of said one or more intended recipients as available targets.